

RELEASE UPON DELIVERY

ADDRESS OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF
SOUTH CAROLINA, AND STATES' RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC
CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, BEFORE THE OVERSEAS
PRESS CLUB IN ROOSEVELT HOTEL, NEW YORK,
OCTOBER 6, 1948.

When you extended to me your kind invitation to discuss with you the issues involved in the States' Rights movement, I hesitated before advising you of my acceptance. Frankly, on first consideration I did not see that very much could be gained by my leaving our campaign in the South and coming to New York, where we are not on the ballot, and address the Overseas Press Club.

On mature thought, however, I concluded that here in the largest city in the world at least one presentation should be made to bring about a better understanding of the fight we are making for state sovereignty and constitutional government in the United States.

During my services overseas, I came in contact with a number of American combat and overseas correspondents. They rendered distinguished service and displayed the very best traditions of American journalism.

I appreciate the fact that I am addressing men and women of keen analytical minds, and I firmly believe if we can convince you our cause is right you will be intellectually honest enough to admit it.

You and I have seen at first hand how a people perish and a country suffers when liberty is snuffed out by a strong centralized state. I know you appreciate just what democracy and constitutional government means to a people and to a nation.

Therefore, I feel that if I can convince you that the so-called civil rights program is a serious threat to constitutional government; if I can prove to you that this reckless bidding of the two old parties for minority blocs of votes in doubtful states will lead to the destruction of our democratic processes of government; and if I can show to you that this movement in which we are engaged

is one not founded on prejudices or racial antagonism -- but is one predicated on principles that are solid and eternal -- then we will have your sympathetic support.

New York to some may be a city extremely foreign to the American way of life. I do not feel that way about it. I am proud of this great city and this great state. Search your records and you will find that many of your outstanding citizens have been through the years and are now Southerners.

We in South Carolina and the South have struggled to educate our sons and daughters, only to have many of the brightest of them come up here and contribute their talents to the up-building of your city and state.

I have often said that if South Carolina and the South was reimbursed for the Southerners we have educated and who have moved to New York, we could provide schools for our population, both white and colored, better than those provided in New York.

And let me remind you of one other fact. The largest contributors to the Democratic party in this city and State have been Southerners who have made a success here. And I can tell you that these New York Democrats with a Southern background do not like what has happened to our party under the leadership of Harry Truman. The very ideals which kept these Southern Democrats in the Democratic party have been bartered away by the 1948 leadership of the Democratic party.

I come to New York, therefore, to appeal to your reason, to urge you to approach the issues which brought forth the States' Rights movement with an open mind, and to bring about a better understanding in this presidential campaign.

I hasten to assure you that the motives which bring me to New York are entirely different from those which took Henry Wallace to Carolina and the South. I know a lot of people up here think the South was not parading its usual brand of hospitality

when Mr. Wallace recently visited us. I certainly did not approve any action which impaired Mr. Wallace's right of free speech and peaceful assemblage.

In all fairness to our people, I think you in New York and in other sections should understand that we have state laws and customs with reference to segregation of the races. Mr. Wallace was familiar with these. As Secretary of Agriculture and as Vice President, he visited the South on many occasions. He stayed at our white hotels without complaint. He had meals with us in our white restaurants and did not suffer from indigestion, either mentally or physically. He addressed segregated meetings all over the South.

It was not until he thought that Truman was out-bidding him for blocs of Negro votes in doubtful states that Mr. Wallace hatched up this hurried trip South to attract headlines.

Enough for the preliminaries. Let me get down to a discussion of the basic issues of the States' Rights movement.

Most of you are familiar, I am sure, with the background of the States' Rights movement. The President appointed a special committee to study "Civil Rights". The Committee made its report, and it gathered dust in the White House until there was a special Congressional election in the Bronx.

Democratic politicians here in New York City frightened the President into believing that unless he did something drastic Henry Wallace's candidate was going to secure the Negro vote.

Thereupon, those around the President dusted off the "Civil Rights" committee report, and the most astonishing Presidential message in American history was transmitted to the Congress.

The nation and the Congress were dumb-founded that a President, and a Democratic President at that, would ask for the passage of Federal laws clearly in violation of the Constitution.

The President put the Republicans on the spot, and it seemed for a time that despite all we could do these so-called

"Civil Rights" measures would be rammed through Congress as political bait in a Presidential election.

Fortunately, before the President's message the Southern Governors had scheduled a meeting at Tallahassee. Our purpose was to increase educational facilities in the South, and particularly to save an existing Negro medical college at Memphis, which was about to close.

The Southern Governors condemned the President and his so-called "Civil Rights" program. I was named chairman of a committee of Southern Governors to confer with the Democratic national leadership in the hope that we could prevent the party from following a course which we knew would inevitably result in the defeat of the party in the coming Presidential election.

Our pleas were rejected and our advice was scorned. The present national party leadership was convinced that the South was "in the bag" and would swallow anything which was done by them in bidding for the votes of minority blocs in other sections.

All of you know what happened in Philadelphia. Not only did the Democratic convention repudiate by roll call vote the party's traditional principle of States' Rights, but it also nominated Mr. Truman and pledged the enactment of his unconstitutional proposals.

There was nothing left for true Democrats to do but fight if we were to maintain our self-respect and give to the people who believe in the principles of the Democratic party a ticket in the Presidential election around which they could rally.

The States' Rights Democratic campaign is based upon fundamental governmental principles, the preservation of which is of vital concern to every American citizen in every section of the nation.

A great many people are deceived by the name "Civil Rights" given to the legislative proposals which we challenge as violating these principles. While the immediate legislative measures purport to deal with civil rights, their enactment would overturn all constitutional precedents to date on the division of sovereignty between

the States and the Federal government, and would also distort or ignore plain and positive provisions of the Constitution prohibiting such legislation.

The enactment of these measures would establish clear precedents for the Congress:

(a) to take over control of elections and of voting qualifications in the States (anti-poll tax bill);

(b) to usurp the functions of the State legislatures and of the State courts in dealing with crimes occurring within the States (anti-lynching bill);

(c) to interfere with State and local laws dealing with the separation of the two races (anti-segregation recommendations);

(d) to assume the right to regulate private businesses and private employment within the States (FEPC bill); and

(e) to create a national police force, thereby invading the field and functions of state, county, city and town policemen, and of duly elected sheriffs, a long step toward a police state in America (Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice).

The enactment of these measures would require Congress to defy constitutional provisions and decisions of the courts which have stood unchallenged for many decades.

Whatever the differing motives of those who misguidedly favor some or all of these proposals, whether well-intended and benevolent or devious and malignant, it is obvious that their enactment would radically change the government of the United States of America laid down in 1787 in the Constitution, and upheld, protected and defended by every generation of the American people since that time.

In their platforms this year, the major political parties have advocated such radical change in our government. Their action left the American people no way of expressing their opposition to such change at the ballot box. When the Democratic party abdicated

its historic function in American political life of opposing the centralization of power in the Federal government and opposing Federal encroachment on the sovereignty of the States, the States' Rights Democrats came into being virtually spontaneously to perform that function and give the people a chance to express themselves.

The American people must understand that while the most vigorous opposition to this unconstitutional program is for the time being, coming from the South, it is imperative that all Americans join in such opposition if they are to protect their individual liberties under the Constitution.

When the States' Rights Democrats nominated their own candidates for President and Vice-President, they felt that if they could carry the electoral votes of even a single State they would win a victory for their cause.

The movement has gained such widespread and enthusiastic support, that it now appears probable that we shall go into the electoral college with over 100 electoral votes. This may well prevent any candidate from getting a majority in the electoral college, and the President will have to be chosen by the House of Representatives as the Constitution provides. In the House, each State casts a single vote, and the candidates voted for by the House are the highest three in the electoral college. It is the new House which will choose the President if no candidate has a majority in the electoral college, and the smaller states will have an excellent chance for the first time in recent history to name a President whom they want, because they will have the balance of power.

It is not necessary however, that we win the Presidency to gain our objectives. We feel certain that as the result of the States' Rights movement, we will bring about the rededication of the Democratic Party to its traditional principles, and return it to the discharge of its historic functions in the nation's political affairs. We will crystallize sentiment against the enactment of the dangerous

legislation which we oppose, and thereby strengthen the position of those in the Congress who are standing firmly on the principle of States' Rights. We shall regain for the South a voice in the political affairs of the nation. We shall demonstrate that it is unprofitable for national political leaders to traffic for the favor of minority blocs to the jeopardy of the liberties of the American people.

From what I have said, I believe you must realize that the fight we are making is not motivated by racial prejudice. The relationship between the two races in the South is generally misunderstood elsewhere. All thinking Southerners know that the solution of the South's economic problems will depend to a large degree on the educational and economic gains of our Negro population. Our progress as a section must be brought about by both races working together and living in harmony side by side as good neighbors.

Racial integrity, as well as peace and good order, requires laws providing for the separation of the two races. We believe in racial integrity and are opposed to racial "integration." Racial integrity is for the best interest of each race; and racial integration is good for neither.

As every enlightened person knows, the vast majority of the people of the South have been striving to improve the economic and educational level of the Negro. I challenge anyone to show where in the history of civilization one race has done more for another race, than the white people of the South have done for the Negroes in their midst.

Modern force bills will only delay the progress which we are determined to continue to achieve. We are fighting for the rights of our States; we shall not neglect their correlative responsibilities.

Now in conclusion let me say just this. If you people in New York want no segregation, then abolish it and do away with

your Harlem. Personally, I think it would be a mistake, but if the people of New York want no segregation, that is their right under the Constitution and no federal law should seek to force segregation upon you. And by the same reasoning, no federal law should attempt to force the South to abandon segregation where we have it and know it is best for both races.

If you want Tom Dewey's State Fair Employment Practices bill in New York, that is your privilege, under the Constitution. But I say that it is a state matter, and the federal government has no right to impose FEPC on the states that do not want it.

Neither the people of New York nor those of South Carolina approve murder. Lynching is murder, just as gangster killing is murder. We had one lynching in the South last year. You have had more gang murders in New York in five years than we have had lynchings in the South in fifty years. If we need a federal law for murder by lynchers, you need a federal law for murder by gangsters. I believe you feel that the crime of murder is one for the State Courts.

As Governor, I recommended abolition of the poll tax as a pre-requisite to voting. It is not a serious bar to suffrage, but I would like to see it repealed in the few states which now have a poll-tax. But I say this is a state matter and we do not want the federal government to make a federal anti-poll tax bill an entering wedge for controlling our election machinery.

My friends, this so-called civil rights program is un-American to the core, and it will not work. Some of you are not too young to remember the efforts of the federal government to tell the people of New York that you could not have beer and whiskey.

The people down in my state favored prohibition. And whatever may be said, let it be remembered that those who supported

prohibition brought it about in an orderly Constitutional manner.

The states surrendered to the federal government, by constitutional amendment, the power to police a prohibition law. Later the states concluded this was a mistake. They resented this policing by the federal government, and the prohibition amendment was repealed.

You here in New York resented this effort, by a federal police power, to make this city dry, even though the federal agents were acting under authority of a constitutional amendment. Well, let me ask you how you think we feel in the South when a President of the United States, and a Democratic president at that, seeks not by a constitutional amendment, but by legislative fiat, to use a federal police power to take over our election machinery, abrogate our segregation laws, and impose employment restrictions contrary to the wishes of both employers and employees.

It would seem to me that the people of New York would be the last people in the United States to want to impose a federal gestapo on the people of the sovereign states of the union. Yet your own Republican Senator Ives, the bosom buddy of Tom Dewey, is author of the federal FEPC bill in the Senate, and most your representatives are supporting the so-called civil rights program.

My friends, every American, whether he be a Northerner or Southerner, Easterner or Westerner, poor man or rich man, employer or employee, white or colored -- all should be with us in this fight.

Once our states lose their sovereignty, and constitutional government is uprooted, individual freedom will vanish and free America will perish.

We must not, and we will not let this happen.

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